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U.S. House of Representatives

SUBCOMMITTEE ON POSITION CLASSIFICATION

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON POST OFFICE AND CIVIL SERVICE

Washington, D.C. 20515

FOR RELEASE: TUESDAY, JULY 22, 1969

Congressman James M. Hanley (D.-N.Y.) today introduced a bill to begin the process of reform in the position classification systems of the Federal Government. Joining him in co-sponsoring the bill were Congressmen Ford, Purcell, Tiernan, Waldie, Cunningham, McClure, and Meskill. At the same time, Hanley announced that hearings would begin on August 5.

Hanley, Chairman of the Position Classification Subcommittee of the House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, said that the bill was based on recommendations contained in the "Report on Job Evaluation and Ranking in the Federal Government," issued by the subcommittee in January.

The measure would establish the policy that all white-collar, civilian positions in the executive branch be classified under a single, coordinated classification system under the general control and supervision of the Civil Service Commission. This is a major departure from current policy, since there are more than twenty-five exemptions to the Classification Act of 1949.

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The bill also establishes the policy that the new system shall use as many recognized methods of job evaluation and ranking as are appropriate for various occupational groups and departments and agencies. At the present time, the General Schedule classification system, under which the bulk of white-collar positions in the Federal Government are classified, uses a single method relying on narrative standards and guidelines. Hanley pointed out that "with the content, nature, and relative value of many occupations changing almost daily, serious doubt has arisen as to whether one method alone is adequate to maintain the flexibility necessary to keep classification current."

A special unit will be created within the Civil Service Commission. The sole function of this unit, which will report directly to the Commissioners, will be to develop a comprehensive plan to create the coordinated system mandated by the bill. This plan, along with proposals for additional legislation, are to be presented to Congress within two years after date of enactment.

Hanley said that the subcommittee will begin hearings on the proposal on Tuesday, August 5th at 10:00 a.m. in Room 210 of the Cannon House Office Building. Chairman Robert Hampton of the Civil Service Commission will be the lead-off witness. Mr. Roger Jones, Assistant Director of the Bureau of the Budget, and Mr. Kenneth Housman, Assistant Postmaster General, Bureau of Personnel, will testify on Tuesday, August 6.

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Hanley said that hearings would resume soon after Congress returns from the August recess.

For further information contact Mr. Richard Barton, Staff Assistant, Subcommittee on Position Classification, Room 207-C, Cannon House Office Building. Phone 225-6295.

MR. HANLEY: Mr. Speaker, today I have introduced a bill which will begin the process of major revisions of the position classification systems of the Federal Government.

In January of this year, my Subcommittee on Position Classification issued its "Report on Job Evaluation and Ranking in the Federal Government." The result of a year of comprehensive study, the report outlined a series of findings and recommendations concerning both the concepts behind and the administration of position classification in the Federal Government. That report is the basis of the bill which has been introduced today.

Position classification is one of the keystones of modern personnel management. Simply stated, the concept behind position classification is that it is the position, or the job, which should be classified and ranked rather than the individual holding that job. Ideally, the process by which the duties and responsibilities of a position are determined, and the position is thereby assigned a relative value, should have an important role in such diverse functions as budgeting, manpower allocation, determination of recruitment and training needs, performance evaluation, and many others. Unfortunately, during the course of the study, we found that often the position classification programs of the various departments and agencies were being used almost exclusively as a pay-setting device and little else.

There are many reasons for this failure to use position classification to the fullest extent possible. As pointed out in our report, much can be done to improve the administration of classification systems in the various departments and agencies. Classifiers should be better trained. They should be more knowledgeable about the program needs of their agencies and should make greater efforts to act as a technical advisor to line management rather than as an isolated professional using jargon and procedures incomprehensible to all but the personnel management fraternity. Greater efforts should be made to insure consistency in classification within and among agencies. Attempts need to be made to simplify what is now an overwhelmingly complex general schedule system to make classification more understandable to managers and employees.

These, and many other things, need to be done. However, they lie within the realm of administrative reform and hence do not readily lend themselves to legislation. We in Congress must do all we can, however, to encourage the Civil Service Commission and the other departments and agencies to institute needed administrative reforms and to change archaic and outdated attitudes toward classification in particular and personnel management in general.

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My bill is designed to be a catalyst in the two areas which I feel are most in need of reform.

The general schedule classification system, under the general control of the Civil Service Commission, is predicated on the assumption that all positions in the Federal Government can and should be classified substantially under one method: narrative standards and guidelines. As a result, the Commission has developed a series of standards which are bewildering in their complexity and overwhelming in sheer volume. The basic principles underlying the use of these standards has remained virtually unchanged since the passage of the first Classification Act in 1923.

The reasoning behind this rigid adherence to one method is understandable. The Commission is the apex of a classification system which covers almost two million employees and thousands of different occupations. It would be natural to wish that one approach be adequate for all, if for no other reason than to reduce the intellectual strain incumbent in using several different methods to achieve a common goal.

As modern government has grown in the past forty years, as it has become more intimately involved with the social, economic, and scientific structure of our country, the demands on position classification systems have grown proportionately. Countless occupations which did not exist forty years ago have been pressed into the general schedule classification system which was originally designed for jobs which were comparatively easy to categorize in 1923. And, with the content, nature, and relative value of many occupations changing almost daily, serious doubt has arisen as to whether one method alone is adequate to maintain the flexibility necessary to keep classifications current. Conversely, it is also questionable whether complex narrative standards are really necessary for a large number of easily categorized positions, such as those in the clerical fields.

The sin on the part of the Commission, then, is one of omission rather than commission. What it has done, it has generally done well. But the Commission has failed to experiment with and adopt the several recognized methods of job evaluation and ranking to determine which best suit the needs of the various departments and agencies and occupational groups.

This relatively narrow approach is rather like creating an orchestra with nothing but violins. The sound might be good; the musicians could be the finest in the world. However, no matter how competent the violinists might be in imitating the sounds of the missing instruments, they could not achieve strength and versatility.

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incorporation of additional instruments can enhance the total sound of an orchestra, so the use of various methods of job evaluation and ranking can be orchestrated by the Civil Service Commission to achieve equal treatment among positions throughout the executive branch while at the same time encouraging much-needed flexibility in administration.

This brings us to a second major problem area pin-pointed by our report. The Classification Act of 1949 contained more than twenty exemptions from its provisions. Since that time, other exemptions have been added. Thus we now have large and small blocks of positions which are classified under unrelated systems. The Postal Field Service uses one approach; the Atomic Energy Commission, National Security Agency, Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service, and the Department of Medicine and Surgery of the Veterans Administration all have their own programs; and the Foreign Service uses yet another approach. Most of these separate systems were created because the general schedule system did not meet their needs; and most of them are competently administered. Yet, to quote our report, "...the number and variety of classification and ranking systems in the Federal service create confusion and result in differences in the methods of selection and appointment, promotion, conditions of work, and pay of employees in comparable conditions."

With these two problems in mind, we can then move on to the major purposes of the bill which I have introduced. I feel that all civilian, white-collar positions in the executive branch should be placed under a single classification plan under the general control and supervision of the Civil Service Commission. However, the integration of the several separate systems under a single "umbrella" would serve no useful purpose if the general schedule system remains unchanged. Thus, I also feel that the proposed plan should utilize as many job evaluation and ranking methods as appropriate. The primary change, and it is a major one, would be that under the proposal there would be one agency, the Civil Service Commission, responsible for establishing a common set of values for the classification of all positions and supervising the use of the various methods of position classification within and among all departments and agencies toward the end of consistent treatment of various occupational groups throughout the Government.

The bill is divided into three titles. Title I outlines some of the major findings of the "Report on Job Evaluation and Ranking in the Federal Government."

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Title II declares that the executive branch should operate under a coordinated job evaluation and ranking system for all civilian positions, utilizing such methods as may be appropriate, under the general supervision and control of the Civil Service Commission.

Title III establishes the mechanism by which proposals for placing the above principles into effect will be prepared and presented to Congress for action. A unit is to be established within the Civil Service Commission which shall report directly to the Commissioners. This office will be responsible for preparing a plan for the establishment of a coordinated system of job evaluation and ranking for all civilian positions. The Commission is given the authority, which it does not now have, to investigate all systems. The Title directs that the Commission submit an interim report within one year of enactment, and that the study be completed and legislative proposals be submitted to Congress within two years after the date of enactment. It also provides for periodic consultation with the House and Senate Post Office and Civil Service Committees and with appropriate employee organizations.

This bill does not represent the final answer to the many problems outlined in the report. However, it does represent an essential first step. Our Subcommittee plans to follow carefully the progress of the Commission's study on a day-by-day basis. I am sure that we can all work together fruitfully to bring about the reforms in position classification which are necessary for personnel management in the Federal Government to meet the demands of the future.

As mentioned in the report, it would be incorrect to say that we are at the crisis stage. The classification systems, as they stand now, have worked moderately well, and valiant efforts have been made by the Civil Service Commission and the departments and agencies to improve the administration of the various systems.

However, as the complexity of modern government increases, the inadequacies of the present systems will be magnified until a crisis does exist. The time to begin to change is now while we still have the latitude and breathing space to carefully consider reform.

Changing job evaluation or ranking systems is a delicate and time-consuming job. It raises many questions and doubts in the minds of employees subject to the systems. It breaks patterns of thought and action with which personnel officials have become comfortable -- perhaps too comfortable -- over the past 45 years. Perhaps several years will be necessary to

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fully implement the recommendations contained in the report and the program outlined in my bill. However, if adopted, these recommendations should result in greater equity to employees throughout the Federal service, assurance of more consistency in the evaluation and ranking of positions, and the foundation for a system which will be more readily adaptable to the changing needs of the Government in the years to come.

Summary of "Job Evaluation Policy Act of 1969"

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